



National Fire and Aviation Executive Board

Directives Task Group Briefing Paper

September 22, 2004

Task #2 “Develop consistent interagency language that describes how to implement each of the wildland fire policy statements.”

On September 15 & 16, 2004 the Directives Task Group met in Boise and continued work on the tasks delegated to the group in August. Task #2 was discussed and the following language will be used in agency manuals, handbooks and guides. This wording has been used in the draft rewrites of the Forest Service 5100 Zero Code, the DOI DM 620 1, and Chapter 1 of the “Red Book”. All agencies should use this language when updating manuals, handbooks and guides.

In 2001 an update of the 1995 Federal Fire Policy was completed and approved by the Secretaries of Interior and Agriculture. On April 21, 2004 the Secretaries approved the "Interagency Strategy for the Implementation of the Federal Wildland Fire Policy". This document directs the agencies to work together to common language, unified guidance and direction for all agencies and bureaus manuals, handbooks and guidelines to complete final implementation of the policy.

1. Safety: Firefighter and public safety is the first priority. All Fire Management Plans and activities must reflect this commitment.
2. Fire Management and Ecosystem Sustainability: The full range of fire management activities will be used to achieve ecosystem sustainability including its interrelated ecological, economic, and social components.
3. Response to Wildland Fire: Fire, as a critical natural process, will be integrated into land, resource management plans and activities on a landscape scale, across bureau boundaries. Response to wildland fires is based on ecological, social and legal consequences of the fire. The circumstances under which a fire occurs, and the likely consequences on firefighter and public safety and welfare, natural and cultural resources, and, values to be protected, dictate the appropriate response to the fire.
4. Use of Wildland Fire: Wildland fire will be used to protect, maintain, and enhance natural and cultural resources and, as nearly as possible, be allowed to function in its natural ecological role. Use of fire will be based on approved Fire Management Plans and will follow specific prescriptions contained in operational plans.

5. Rehabilitation and Restoration: Rehabilitation and restoration efforts will be undertaken to protect and sustain ecosystems, public health, safety, and to help communities protect infrastructure.
6. Protection Priorities: The protection of human life is the single, overriding suppression priority. Setting priorities among protecting human communities and community infrastructure, other property and improvements, and natural and cultural resources will be done based on the values to be protected, human health and safety, and the costs of protection. Once people have been committed to an incident, these human resources become the highest value to be protected.
7. Wildland Urban Interface: The operational role of the agencies as partners in the wildland/urban interface are wildland firefighting, hazard fuels reduction, cooperative prevention and education, and technical assistance. Structural fire suppression is the responsibility of Tribal, State, and local governments. Federal agencies may assist with exterior structural protection activities under formal Fire Protection Agreements that specify the mutual responsibilities of the partners, including funding. (Some Federal agencies have full structural protection authority for their facilities on lands they administer and may also enter into formal agreements to assist Tribes, State and local governments with full structural protection.)
8. Planning: Every area with burnable vegetation must have an approved Fire Management Plan. Fire Management Plans are strategic plans that define a program to manage wildland and prescribed fires based on the area's approved land management plan. Fire management plans must provide for firefighter and public safety, include fire management strategies, tactics, and alternatives; address values to be protected and public health issues; and be consistent with resource management objectives, activities of the area, and environmental laws and regulations.
9. Science: Fire management plans and programs will be based on a foundation of sound science. Research will support ongoing efforts to increase our scientific knowledge of biological, physical, and sociological factors. Information needed to support fire management will be developed through an integrated interagency fire science program. Scientific results must be made available to managers in a timely manner and must be used in the development of land management plans, fire management plans, and implementation plans.
10. Preparedness: Agencies will ensure their capability to provide safe, cost-effective fire management programs in support of land, and resource management plans through appropriate planning, staffing, training, equipment and management oversight.
11. Suppression: Fires are suppressed at minimum cost, considering firefighter and public safety, benefits, and values to be protected, and be consistent with resource objectives.
12. Prevention: Agencies will work together and with their partners and other affected groups and individuals to prevent unauthorized ignition of wildland fires.
13. Standardization: Agencies will use compatible planning processes, funding mechanisms, training and qualification requirements, operational procedures, values-to-be-protected methodologies, and public education programs for all fire management activities.
14. Interagency Cooperation: Fire management planning, preparedness, prevention, suppression, fire use, restoration and rehabilitation, monitoring, ~~and~~ research, and education

will be conducted on an interagency basis with the involvement of all partners.

15. Communication and Education: Agencies will enhance knowledge and understanding of wildland fire management policies and practices through internal and external communication and education programs. These programs will be continuously improved through the timely and effective exchange of information among all affected agencies and organizations.

16. Agency Administrator and Employee Roles : Agency administrators will ensure that their employees are trained, certified and made available to participate in the wildland fire program locally, regionally, and nationally as the situation demands. Employees with operational, administrative, or other skills will support the wildland fire program as necessary. Agency administrators are responsible and will be held accountable for making employees available.

17. Evaluation: Agencies will develop and implement a systematic method of evaluation to determine effectiveness of projects through implementation of the 2001 Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy. The evaluation will assure accountability, facilitate resolution of areas of conflict, and identify resource shortages and agency priorities.

Operational Clarification for Consistent Wildland Fire Management Policy Implementation

- A. Only one management objective will be applied to a wildland fire. Wildland fires will either be managed for resource benefits or suppressed. A wildland fire cannot be managed for both objectives concurrently. If two wildland fires converge, they will be managed as a single wildland fire*
- B. Human caused wildland fires will be suppressed in every instance and will not be managed for resource benefits.*
- C. Once a wildland fire has been managed for suppression objectives, it may never be managed for resource benefit objectives*
- D. The Appropriate Management Response (AMR) is any specific action suitable to meet Fire Management Unit (FMU) objectives. Typically, the AMR ranges across a spectrum of tactical options (from monitoring to intensive management actions). The AMR is developed by using FMU strategies and objectives identified in the Fire Management Plan.*
- E. The Wildland Fire Situation Analysis process is used to determine and document the suppression strategy from the full range of responses available for suppression operations. Suppression strategies are designed to meet the policy objectives of suppression.*
- F. Wildland fire use is the result of a natural event. The Land/Resource Management Plan, or the Fire Management Plan, will identify areas where the strategy of wildland fire use is suitable. The Wildland Fire Implementation Plan (WFIP) is the tool that examines the available response strategies to determine if a fire is being considered for wildland fire use.*

G . When a prescribed fire or a fire designated for wildland fire use is no longer achieving the intended resource management objectives and contingency or mitigation actions have failed, the fire will be declared a wildfire. Once a wildfire, it cannot be returned to a prescribed fire or wildland fire use status.